

The President's Daily Brief

4 January 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Part of the Cambodian Government force trying to open Route 4 southwest of the capital was ambushed over the weekend. (Page 1)

In Laos, government irregulars moving on Ban Ban from the north have been forced to pull back from several positions in the past few days. (Page 2)

Kosygin's interview with a Japanese newspaper, in which he reiterated Soviet endorsement of SALT, has been given some play in Soviet news media. (Page 3)

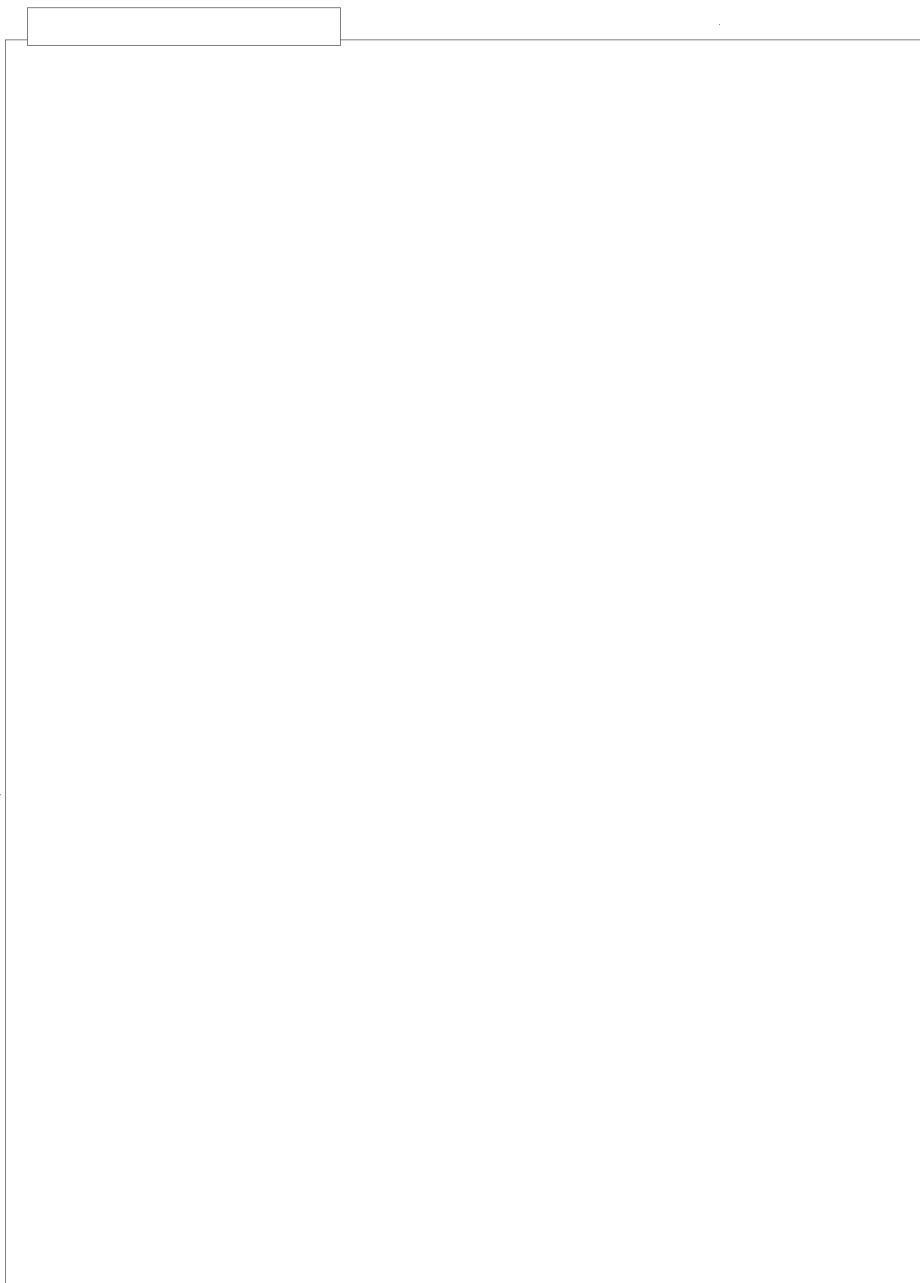
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In Bolivia, Torres' promise of elections may undercut some critics who have been plotting against him. (Page 5)

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CAMBODIA

Government troops moving from the south on 1 January to retake the Pich Nil pass area on Route 4 were ambushed and routed by Communist forces about 14 miles north of Veal Renh. Part of the task force regrouped to the south at Taney village, but was again attacked by a large enemy force which also destroyed a bridge on the highway. The next day the remainder of the task force was attacked just north of Taney.

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The government's plans to reopen Route 4 may be stalled by these setbacks, although government units approaching the Pich Nil pass from the north have so far proceeded without incident.

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LAOS

Between 31 December and 3 January the Communists attacked a total of ten government irregular positions northwest and northeast of Ban Ban. In each action the irregulars withdrew to the north and allowed the position to fall rather than risk unacceptably high casualties.

This spate of attacks seems to indicate stiffer enemy resistance to the harassing operation by several battalions of Vang Pao's irregulars against the Communist logistics base at Ban Ban.

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On the Plaine's western flank, there was little weekend combat activity although the irregular-neutralist base at Muong Soui received two light rocket attacks.

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In southern Laos, government irregulars have retaken without opposition two of the three small sites on the southern rim of the Bolovens Plateau that fell to the enemy on 1 January. In addition, Site 22, the last major government base on the plateau's eastern rim, came under mortar attack on 3 January, but there were no casualties.

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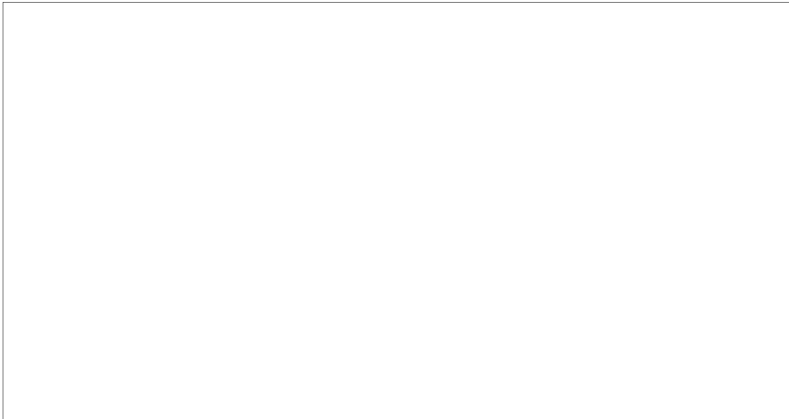
USSR

Premier Kosygin reiterated Moscow's endorsement of SALT in an interview with a Japanese newspaper on 1 January which has been published, at least in part, by the Soviet news agency TASS and by Izvestia. We have not received the full Izvestia account, but in the TASS version Kosygin expressed the Soviet desire for "reasonable" agreement equally advantageous to both sides. He said "a study of relevant questions" continued during the last session at Helsinki, but added that these problems are not simple and that positive results require efforts by both sides.

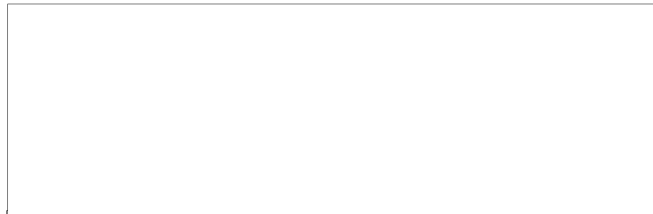
Kosygin expressed similar views in an interview with an Indian journalist last August, but his comments were not repeated in the Soviet news media. Brezhnev's remarks on this subject were given wide press coverage last April when he said the USSR would welcome a "sensible" agreement and would do its utmost to make the SALT talks useful.

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NOTE

Bolivia: Eight military officers who took part in the overthrow last October of former President Ovando have been relieved of their commands, and two members of the three-man military junta named shortly before President Torres assumed power have been retired. In addition, Torres has announced that he will call elections as soon as a nationwide referendum scheduled for June approves a new constitution and electoral statutes.

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